

### III. CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT

Historic Context  
Market Economics  
Land Use and Zoning  
Housing  
Transportation  
Urban Design and Public Realm





### III. Corridor Assessment

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

Georgia Avenue has historically played a significant role in the development and growth of the city and has derived its identity from the types of uses that found an address along the corridor. The Georgia Avenue corridor has been the center of residential and commercial activity and an integral part of the surrounding neighborhoods since development of the new federal city began expanding towards Maryland in the late 1800s.

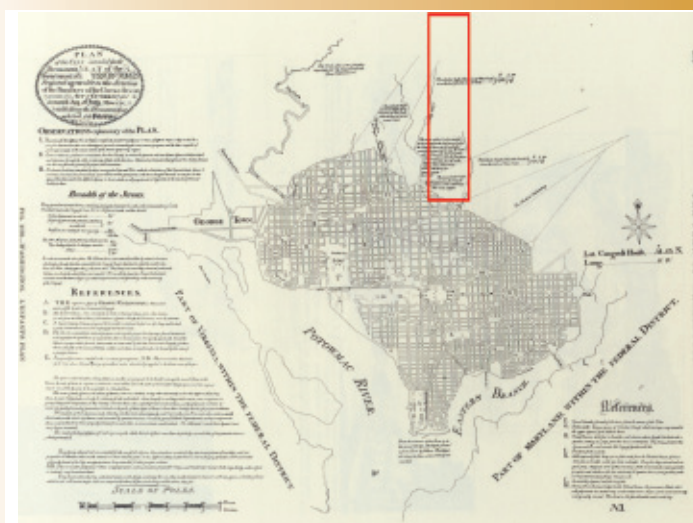
The transportation system of the city greatly influenced the direction of residential and commercial development along the corridor. In the 1800s, several streetcar lines were extended from the city's center. One was the Seventh Street route that terminated at Rock Creek Church Road. A turnpike, built in 1819, ran along the avenue from the old city boundary (Florida Avenue) to the District line (Eastern Avenue). By 1912, trolley service extended north on the Seventh Street line to Silver Spring, Maryland. In the 1930s, buses were introduced and eventually replaced the trolley car. These early transportation routes shaped shopping patterns and created the commercial frontage on the corridor.

In the 1850s, most of the development in the city was still south of S Street. Howard University was established in 1867 from extensive federal land extending further north to the Old Soldiers Home. LeDroit Park was developed in the 1870s on land acquired from the University. The areas north of Howard University to the Maryland boundary grew slowly until the early 1800s when several racetracks were built. They became a major social and recreational activity and drew large crowds.

By 1902, development boomed, former estates were subdivided and the pattern of row house development was established in most of the area. From 1890 to the mid 1900s, Brightwood (including all the territory from Silver Spring to Rock Creek Church Road) was subdivided in to Brightwood, Manor, Takoma, and Shepherd Park. The U.S. Soldiers and Airmen's Home, built in 1909, and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, established in 1922, stimulated homeownership and neighborhood commercial development and shaped the area's landscape.

By the early to mid 1900s, Georgia Avenue was recognized as one of the most successful, prestigious mixed-use commercial corridors in the city. It served the residential, recreational and social needs of a rich, vibrant and culturally diverse community. However, integration laws in the 1960s caused out migration to the suburbs and the population shifted from majority white to majority black. Also during this period, the corridor began to lose its vitality as a center of commerce due to suburban growth and increased automobile use, which provided and continue to produce strong competition to the retail stores along Georgia Avenue.

Many events have led to the current condition of Georgia Avenue over the last thirty plus years, ranging from civil unrest in the late 1960s to suburban flight over the next two decades. Additionally, retailing has changed forever. Big-box stores, malls, outlets, power centers, catalogs, the Internet, and lifestyle changes have changed how and where today's consumers shop. Since the 1990s, Georgia Avenue is typical of an inner-city area going through transition.



L'Enfant Plan of Washington, D.C.



McMillian Plan of Washington, D.C.



Georgia Avenue Trolley ca. 1912



Corner Drug Store Georgia Avenue, early 1900's



Georgia Avenue, early 1900's



Georgia Avenue Row Houses, early 1900's



III. Corridor Assessment

# MARKET ECONOMICS



3800 Block Georgia Avenue, East



Georgia Avenue Retail

## Demographics

The District of Columbia lost population from 1990 to 2000 with a decrease from 606,900 to 572,059 representing a 5.7 percent loss. In contrast, the Georgia Avenue study area’s population remained steady during the same period at approximately 20,550 in total population. At the individual tract level, some tracts had only minor drops in population and others had small growth.

The study area has become more racially and ethnically diverse, with blacks constituting 67.4% of the population, Whites 9.6%, and Hispanics/Latinos at 27.6%. The study area’s median household income increased 30.9% from 1990 to 2000, from \$25,415 to \$33,261 respectively. However, the study area’s 2000 median household income is lower than the city’s average of \$40,127. In terms of household tenure, the 2000 renter and owner-occupied rates are almost even with 51.2% renter-occupied and 48.8% owner-occupied. The owner-occupied rate increased 7.6% from 1990 to 2000 and is higher than the District’s rate of 40.8%.

The chart on the right provides some basic demographic information for the study area.

## Commercial Market

The Georgia Avenue study area’s commercial market operates as a urban community business district that includes office and retail uses. While the predominant building form is the row house with a storefront addition that extends to the sidewalk, the area’s commercial stock also includes one-story commercial buildings, as well as older free-standing commercial buildings. Much of the existing commercial space is obsolete in terms of today’s retail industry standards. This space is characterized by low ceiling heights, located on narrow lots without modern features or adequate parking. Some of the existing retailers appear to be undercapitalized, as some buildings are in need of maintenance and/or improvements. Affordable rents have allowed individual entrepreneurs to start and grow retail businesses in the area.

The study area also has numerous commercial vacancies scattered throughout the corridor. These vacancies detract from the ability of retailers to attract customers or for the area to attract a better mix of new businesses. The business inventory for major business categories within the study area showed an overabundance of repetitious types

### Population

	1990	2000
Georgia Ave. Study Area	20,592	20,550
District	606,900	572,059

### Race and Ethnicity

	1990			2000		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
Georgia Ave. Study Area	5%	88.70%	10.60%	9.60%	67.40%	27.66%
District	29.60%	65.80%	5.40%	31%	60%	8%

### Median Household Income

	1990	2000
Georgia Ave. Study Area	\$25,415	\$33,261
District	\$30,727	\$40,127

### Number of Households

	1990	2000
Georgia Ave. Study Area	7,277	7,021
District	249,634	248,338

### Household Tenure

	1990		2000	
	Renter	Owner	Renter	Owner
Georgia Ave. Study Area	58.80%	41.20%	51.20%	48.80%
District	61.10%	38.90%	59.20%	40.80%

Note: Includes Census Data for Tracts: 24, 25.02, 29, 31, 32

of businesses such as convenience stores and liquor stores. Existing office space includes small-scale professional office uses, which includes medical space, real estate-related businesses and insurance offices.

## Commercial Space

Approximately 173,000 square feet of commercial space exists within the study area. This includes both retail and office uses. Portions of the total commercial space may not be used to full capacity given vacancies and underutilized retail space.

Retail: Approximately 130,000 square feet of retail space (of the total 173,000 square feet of commercial) exists within the study area. Because the retail space varies along the corridor, the following offers a break down of the retail market by area:

1. From Taylor St. to New Hampshire Avenue: Businesses appear to be better capitalized than the

rest of the corridor. Retail vacancies are low and Safeway serves as a strong retail anchor. This area also benefits from the 3,100 daily commuters using the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro station and from some of the drivers and passengers of the 11,000 daily auto round-trips on Georgia Avenue.

2. From Princeton Place to Girard Street: The retail area south of the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro Station and north of Howard University have a harder time competing for customers given the distance of the Metro station and without the benefit of a large institutional anchor. This area is also plagued by larger-scale vacancies and occasional noxious uses. Without immediate access to the Metro Station or Howard University, retail businesses are more dependent on walk-in traffic from the surrounding neighborhood and some passing commuters. However, tapping the commuter market is difficult for some stores that lack dedicated parking.



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- From Columbia Road to Euclid Street: Retail establishments in the southern portion of the study area are close to Howard University, which helps to capture a customer base made up of students, staff, and faculty. This proximity contributes to create a stable consumer base for some of this study area's retail uses. However, some retailers have indicated that because the student population is not year-round, some businesses are negatively impacted.

**Office:** Approximately 43,000 square feet of office space (of the total 173,000 square feet of commercial) exist within the study area. The market area currently provides limited Class B and C office space that includes small medical space, real estate-related businesses and insurance offices.

#### Commercial Market Demand

**Retail:** The market for the area indicates a strong need for additional neighborhood-oriented retail uses not currently located in the market area. For example, the area does not have a major drugstore, a coffee shop, or family-style sit-down restaurant. Additionally, the study area has one major supermarket, Safeway, located in the northern commercial area. This store is 22,000 square feet, which is relatively small compared to today's newly built supermarkets that have specialty sections including salad bars, florists, prepared foods for immediate consumption, bakeries, and delicatessens.

Households located within the market area, which include census tracts 24, 25.02, 29, 31, and 32, annually spend approximately \$19,000 per household on groceries, prescriptions, apparel, dining out, entertainment and personal services. Based on these annual expenditures, the amount of total retail space that can be supported by the market is 119,700 square feet. However, the demand from area residents does not match the current supply of stores and retail space found here. Much of the current retail inventory (130,000 square feet) is obsolescent space that does not meet modern retail standards due to low ceiling heights, inadequate windows, small spaces and a lack of loading facilities. Also, much of the existing retail space is not well located relative to the demand. In order to meet residents' needs for modern stores and to sustain the stores' operations in the future, at least one-half of the supportable retail space should be in new structures properly located relative to residential development and transit. This suggests that several existing retail spaces should be reconfigured or

replaced to meet the requirements of today's retail industry. **Office:** Over the next ten years, the study area is likely to be able to support 4,000 to 9,000 square feet of new office space. This office space should be located on the first and/or second floors of buildings.

#### Residential Market

Single-family detached and attached units, as well as multi-family units characterize the housing stock in the Georgia Avenue market area. This housing stock includes a total of 7, 035 units based on the study area's five census tracts (24, 25.02, 29, 31, 32) and the 2000 U.S. Census data. Fifty-eight (58) percent of this housing stock was built prior to 1939 and only 2.2 percent were built since 1980. In general, the market area's housing stock is aging with minimal construction since the 1960s. It should be noted, however, that new housing—particularly condominium units—have been recently developed (starts in 2003 and first quarter 2004) in and around the study area.

**Rental and Owner-Occupied Units:** The Georgia Avenue market area is a close split in terms of owner-occupied versus renter-occupied:

Fifty-one (51) percent of the Georgia Avenue market area is renter-occupied with a rental housing stock consisting of small to medium-sized apartment complexes, row houses and apartments with divided single-family homes. Residents aged 65 or older represent 20.3 percent of the renter-occupied housing units. The inventory of larger rental complexes in the market area and surrounding area indicates a relatively tight market for rental units with occupancy rates at most complexes ranging from 95 to 98 percent. Typically, a healthy rental market would have occupancies of roughly 95 percent to allow for vacancies between tenants to clean and repaint. Rents range from \$625 to \$1,925 per month, with monthly tenant parking charges ranging from \$25 to \$75.

Forty-nine (49) percent of the Georgia Avenue market area is owner-occupied primarily in single-family detached and attached units. The 2000 US Census reports that about 35 percent of the owner-occupied housing is owned by individuals 65 to 75 years or older. Out of the owner-occupied housing stock, 18 percent are in multi-family structures of two to five plus units. From 2002 to 2003, one- and two-bedroom single-family units sold for median sale price of \$160,000. From 2002 to 2003, houses with four or more bedrooms sold for a median sale price of \$272,500. Based

on first quarter 2003 data, condominiums selling in the market were quite limited. Only three condominiums were identified in the Georgia Avenue market area with an average price of \$83,500. However, with the recent development of condominium projects in and near the study area, new condominium units will be brought on line, with sale prices in the \$200,000 and above.

#### Residential Market Demand

With the increase in prices among competitive neighborhoods, homebuyers see opportunities for similar sales price increases throughout the study area. However, the demand for housing in the Georgia Avenue study area will be some what challenged by the deteriorated neighborhood conditions, such as the existing vacant and deteriorating housing units, crime, under-capitalized businesses, and lack of community amenities.

**Condominiums:** Although the market for condominiums in the Georgia Avenue community is just emerging, the experience in other emerging neighborhoods indicates that the market can support residential condominium apartments near to the Metro station. These units should range in price from \$200 to \$245 per square foot. This would result in sale prices for a one-bedroom unit between \$180,000 and \$195,000 and for a two-bedroom unit between \$200,000 and \$225,000 for market-rate units. Potential absorption is estimated at 12 condominium units per month. Total condominium demand is 720 units in the Georgia Avenue market area over the five-year period from 2004 to 2008.

**Townhouses:** Townhouse pricing is based on recent interviews with area developers selling considerably higher priced units in adjacent neighborhoods. Interviews point to a strong market for larger townhouses with modern features, which is consistent with trends in the District of Columbia and the nation as a whole. These units should range in price from \$230 to \$280 per square foot. For an average sized 1,500 square foot townhouse in the study area, the sale prices should be between \$345,000 and \$420,000. Potential absorption is estimated at 5 units per month. Total townhouse demand is 285 units in the Georgia Avenue market area over the five-year period from 2004 to 2008.

**Rental Apartments:** Over the next five years, the potential for an increase in interest rates is likely based on the historically low current rates. As rates increase, the condo-



Residential Building on Quincy Street



Georgia Avenue Retail

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# MARKET ECONOMICS



Princeton Place Row Houses



3600 Block Georgia Avenue, West

minium market will weaken; giving rise to higher demand for rental housing. With the Metro station and the impending new mixed-used development, Georgia Avenue neighborhoods should be better able to approach rents being achieved for newly developed apartments in more established neighborhoods. Newly constructed apartments in the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro station area could support monthly residential rents ranging from \$1.60 to \$1.80 per square foot. These potential rents are affordable to households with annual incomes between \$50,000 to \$75,000. Residential development located more than one-half mile from the Metro station will command lower monthly rents ranging from \$1.55 to \$1.65 per square foot. Potential absorption is estimated at 10 market-rate apartments per month, centered around the Metro station development. Total apartment demand is 600 units in the Georgia Avenue market area over the five-year period from 2004 to 2008.

Residential Demand: 5-year period (2004-2008)

Unit Type	Number of New Units
Condominiums	720
Townhouses	285
Apartments	600
Total new units	1,605

## Business and Economic Development

Central to stabilizing and attracting new investment to the Georgia Avenue corridor is providing incentives and assistance to existing businesses and new investors. Tools to assist with new construction costs, façade improvements, business expansion and/or relocation, and small business operation/development are needed throughout the corridor.



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LAND USE  
AND ZONING

Comprehensive Plan

The Home Rule Act of 1973 requires the District government to develop a Comprehensive Plan, which is a long-range (20 year) general policy document that provides overall guidance for future planning and development of the city. The first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1985. The plan is updated periodically, most recently in 1999. The DC Office of Planning is currently revising the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Small Area Plans, like the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro Station Area & Corridor Plan, that are approved by the District Council become supplement to the Comprehensive Plan.

Development of Land Use Pattern

Georgia Avenue’s land use pattern was developed primarily during the early part of the Twentieth Century, mainly with residential structures, including row houses, apartment buildings and single-family detached dwellings. Although no parking spaces were required when most of these buildings were constructed, some of the row houses and single-family detached dwellings were improved with detached garages that were accessed from the alleys.

Commercial development included small, one-story commercial structures, and the ground floor of some apartment buildings. Over time, many of the row houses were expanded with storefront additions for retail uses. As many of these commercial structures are on narrow lots, have low ceilings, and lack modern features, they are obsolete in terms of today’s retail industry standards.

The lack of parking for businesses and residents is another challenge resulting from the development history of the corridor. Georgia Avenue was primarily developed prior to World War II, when few Americans had automobiles and most met their transportation needs through a combination of walking and using the trolley. Demand for parking was minimal. However, as the use and ownership of automobiles increased significantly during the second half of the last century, the lack of off-street parking became apparent along the corridor, for both business and residents. Most individual businesses were unable to provide sufficient off-street parking due to the small size of the lots. Some property owners did acquire adjacent properties for the provision of off-street parking.

Zoning

The Zoning Regulations of the District of Columbia control land use, density, height and bulk characteristics of property in the city. The District of Columbia Zoning Map identifies the designated zoning for all parcels of land in the City. All construction or rehabilitation on private land must conform to the requirements imposed by the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map adopted by the DC Zoning Commission or seek relief before the appropriate bodies. The Zoning Regulations also must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Existing Zoning

The majority of the study area is zoned for mixed-use development, with the predominant land use along Georgia Avenue being commercial. Residential zone districts exist only in the northern portion of the study area. Specifically, properties on the east side of Georgia Avenue from Varnum Street to Decatur Street are located within the R-4 Zone District (a moderate density zone permitting primarily row dwellings and those that have been converted for two or more families). Properties on the east side of Georgia Avenue, between Buchanan Street and Decatur Street are located in the R-1-B Zone District (primarily one-family detached dwellings). Properties on the west side of Georgia Avenue, between Allison Street and Buchanan Street (4500 block) are located in the R-4 Zone

Georgia Avenue Zoning Districts (Euclid Street to Decatur Street)

Zone	Predominant Use/Description	Permitted FAR	Permitted FAR with a PUD	Maximum Height	Maximum Height with a PUD
C-2-A	Permits office, retail, housing, and mixed mixed use.	2.5	3	50 ft.	65 ft.
C-3-A	Permits major retail, office housin, and mixed uses.	4	4.5	65 ft.	90 ft.
R-4	Permits single-family residential uses (including detached, semi-detached, and row dwellings and flats), churches, and public schools.	n/a	1	40 ft.	60 ft.



Existing Zoning Districts

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## LAND USE AND ZONING

District. Several apartment buildings do exist in this block, although apartment buildings are not permitted in the R-4 Zone District. Three of these apartment buildings date from the 1920s. This block also includes row houses and detached and semi-detached dwellings.

Two commercial zone districts make up the remainder of the corridor: the C-3-A Zone District (a medium density mixed-use zone providing a broad range of goods and services) on both sides of Georgia Avenue between Park Road and Shepherd Street and the C-2-A Zone District (a low to medium density mixed-use zone providing a limited range of retail goods and services) on the remainder of the corridor. The C-2-A Zone also extends east of Georgia Avenue on both sides of Upshur Street to Eighth Street and west of Georgia Avenue on the north side of Lamont Street to the alley located behind buildings fronting on Sherman Avenue.

### Current Land Use Pattern

The land use pattern that has developed along the corridor is mainly a continuous stretch of retail uses. These retail uses, however, lack the diversity of retail services that many residents desire, forcing them to go elsewhere to meet their shopping and service needs. There are also many vacant storefronts along the corridor, indicating an excess of retail space. These vacancies are also attributable to today's modern retail options, which now include big box stores, shopping malls, catalog shopping and the Internet, all of which contribute to reducing the demand on an older, local commercial corridor like Georgia Avenue. As indicated above, many of the buildings are not suitable for modern retailing, which further contributes to the high rate of vacancies.

Vacant storefronts are evidence that the market has not been able to fill these units. These vacant, boarded up stores not only discourage existing retailers from investing in their businesses and new retailers from entering the area, they also contribute to the crime and other quality of life issues along the corridor. The reduction of vacant and abandoned spaces, and the addition of more people on the street will increase the sense of safety, as the number of available places to hide is decreased and the number of eyes on the street is increased.

Since the corridor's land use pattern has changed to mostly commercial uses, there is now a lack of residential

development, which would provide a strong "shot in the arm" for retailing. Encouraging housing, as well as office development, would support retail by creating more customers and supporting longer hours. Additionally, residential units above retail keep the street active around the clock, improve security through the provision of additional "eyes on the street" and provide convenience for residents and sales volume for retailers.

In summary, three key issues emerged from three stakeholder groups—residents, businesses, and property owners—concerning land use and zoning along the corridor:

1. *Residents:* Encourage a better mix of uses, including quality neighborhood-serving retail and a mix of local and national retailers;
2. *Businesses:* Strengthen existing viable and desirable businesses, particularly long-time businesses that have contributed to and served the community; and
3. *Property Owners:* Encourage building expansion by increasing Floor Area Ratios (FAR).



### III. Corridor Assessment

## HOUSING

During phase II of the planning process, it became evident that in order to stimulate investment within the corridor, the conditions of the surrounding neighborhoods needed to be considered. Specifically for the surrounding neighborhoods in the Ward 1 portion of the corridor, issues relating to the residential building conditions and the Park Morton apartment complex, need to be addressed.

The following details the two key housing issues:

#### Housing Rehabilitation and Vacant & Abandoned Properties

While there are some signs that property owners and private investors are rehabilitating residential properties throughout the Ward 1 portion of the study area, there is still a visible significant number of dilapidated housing in need of rehabilitation. The Plan's market analysis indicates that the market area's housing stock is aging with minimal construction since the 1960s. Fifty-eight percent of the existing units were built prior to 1939 and only 2.2 percent or 164 units were built since 1980. Property owners who are not able to maintain their properties, due to either negligence or elderly homeowners and others with limited means for property maintenance, has further put stress on this aging housing stock.

The Ward 1 portion of the study area also contains many vacant and abandoned residential properties. Clusters of these properties exist on the east and west side of Georgia Avenue.

These vacant and abandoned properties also present serious fire safety concerns for the community. These structures are highly vulnerable to accidental fires because of faulty wiring and flammable debris and can also be susceptible to homeless individuals who start fires inside the property to keep warm. These properties are also targets for arson.

As a whole, vacant and abandoned properties contribute to blight, crime, and neighborhood instability. Property abandonment negatively impacts property values within the community, provides lower tax revenues for the city, causes higher municipal costs and greater negative externalities.

#### Park Morton Apartment Complex

The Park Morton apartment development is a public housing complex located in the Park View neighborhood (Ward 1) of the study area. The property was built in 1960 and is made up of 17 garden-style apartment buildings with 174 walk-up units, all of which are two-bedroom units. The majority of the households are headed by females with two to four children. All of the units at Park Morton are under the Low Income Public Housing inventory, which does not include any Housing Choice Voucher Program recipients.

Apartment residents and surrounding neighborhood residents have expressed concerns about the amount of crime and drug activity on and surrounding the Park Morton apartment complex. Many have viewed this situation as a contributing factor to attracting and fostering negative activity in the surrounding neighborhood, as well as an obstacle to any serious investment in and around the corridor.

The District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) who owns and manages the apartment complex, has worked extensively to reduce crime at the complex. Just as recently as 5 to 10 years, the development was plagued with crime but over the years crime has been significantly reduced. This has primarily been through lease enforcement ("One Strike" policy) and coordinated public safety efforts between the DCHA and Metropolitan Police departments.

The following improvements/actions have been implemented:

- Installation of cameras and bulletproof lighting
- Installation of barriers in alleyways behind Park Road and Morton Street
- Weed and Seed mobile unit
- Removal of ladders leading to building roofs and locking of access hatches to roofs
- Construction of a new playground
- Upgrade of fire alarms
- Interior and exterior painting

- Repairing/replacing of exterior doors and door locks
- Landscape improvements

Although it is evident that DCHA has made improvements to Park Morton in terms of safety and physical upgrades, the development is still challenged with a poor physical layout and design, which consists of suburban style apartment buildings that are not in character with the surrounding row house neighborhood and creates a visible exclusion from the surrounding community. As such, Park Morton incorporates design elements that have the tendency to foster criminal activity, such as odd street patterns that dead end in the middle of the development and central spaces that are invisible from the street.

Many residents of Park Morton are in need of social services to improve their quality of life. The issues include:

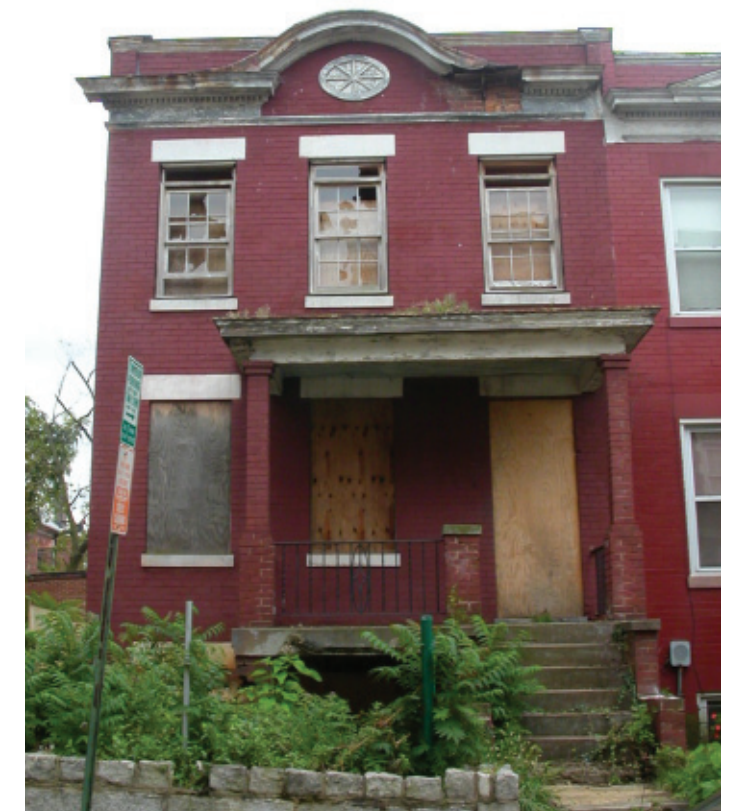
- Unemployment and underemployment; job training



Boarded and Vacant Housing In Study Area



Georgia Avenue Row Houses



Boarded and Vacant Housing In Study Area



### III. Corridor Assessment

## HOUSING

- Drug rehabilitation
- Lack of proper supervision for youth
- Lack of appropriate activities for youth in the community
- Improved parenting skills
- Illegal drug activity by visitors/non-residents

opportunity sites within the study area should be developed to include affordable units.

\* Note: Affordable housing is a federally-defined term and process which regulates how federal funds can be used to create homeownership and/or rental housing opportunities. Affordability is based on household size and household income as an adjusted percentage of the Area Median Income (AMI) for the metropolitan region. As of January 28, 2004, the AMI for the Washington Metropolitan Region is \$85,400 for a family of four.

It will be critical to explore opportunities to address both the physical and social revitalization of the Park Morton public housing complex not only to improve the apartment development and the living condition of those who live there but also to create an asset to build upon for future investment in the neighborhood as a whole.

### Affordable Housing Assessment

Due to the current housing market and escalating housing prices throughout the District, residents in the study area expressed the critical need to preserve and create affordable housing. A key success of the planning process was the development of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the District owned land adjacent to the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro Station. The RFP was fashioned in a public process with input from community stakeholders, which led to the selection of a developer to build a mixed-use development project. The project will consist of 17,000 square feet of ground floor space and 148 residential units, of which 20 percent has been set aside for affordable units (5% at 30% Area Median Income (AMI) and under, 10% at 50% AMI and under, and 5% at 60% AMI and under). \*

Although the study area still holds a good level of housing at affordable prices, this housing stock is shrinking with the effects of the strong housing market demand as well as rising housing values. These same high housing values that are positive in supporting and encouraging reinvestment and development in the study area also present challenges for long-time residents to stay in the area, particularly low-income renters and elderly homeowners. Public and private redevelopment



Park Morton Apartments



Park Morton Apartments



### III. Corridor Assessment

## TRANSPORTATION



Quincy Street and Georgia Avenue



Intersection of New Hampshire and Georgia Avenue

The transportation assessment presents a summary of existing transportation elements for the area:

- Traffic
- Parking
- Transit
- Pedestrian
- Bicycle

In addition, the assessment also focuses on some general transportation issues for the following two locations:

- Georgia Avenue/New Hampshire Avenue Intersection Vicinity
- Georgia Avenue/Kansas Avenue Intersection Vicinity

Existing transportation issues are identified based on community concerns, as well as observations and analysis of existing conditions for the corridor.

### Traffic

Georgia Avenue (Route 29), within the study area, is a 60-foot (curb to curb) arterial roadway with four travel lanes and two permanent parking lanes. The posted speed limit on Georgia Avenue is 30 miles per hour (mph), with traffic signals located at approximately half of the study area intersections.

The Georgia Avenue Corridor, due to its relatively good peak period traffic flow, is used during the morning and evening rush periods as a commuter route into and out of the downtown core. The “Average Daily Traffic” (ADT) volume for Georgia Avenue is approximately 22,000, within the study area.

Local area residents have expressed concern that traffic traveling along Georgia Avenue often appears to exceed the posted 30-mph speed limit. Residents have also expressed concern about excessive speeds on adjacent residential streets in the area.

### Parking

The Georgia Avenue Corridor currently contains both on-street and off-street parking within the study area. Approximately 220 on-street parking spaces and eight different kinds of on-street parking restrictions exist along Georgia Avenue within the study area according to a recent on-street parking inventory performed by the District Department of Transportation (DDOT).

There are several areas with unrestricted 24-hour, on-street parking available, in addition to areas with one-hour, two-hour, and three-hour parking restrictions. Metered parking restrictions can be assets to local area businesses because they allow spaces to be more readily available to potential customers. Some local business owners have expressed concern that one-hour parking restrictions do not provide enough allowable parking time for some retail patrons.

Ward 4 residents who live near the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metrorail Station and depend upon local on-street parking voiced concern that they have to compete with other Ward 4 District residents who live further away and drive to and use the Metro. Although the Ward 4 residents who drive from further away do legally utilize the local on-street parking near the Metrorail station, they nevertheless increase the competition for local on-street parking for nearby residents.

There are some small, private off-street parking lots located along Georgia Avenue in the study area. These lots are generally restricted for patrons of the commercial uses located along Georgia Avenue, and not for general public use. There are currently no public off-street parking lots located within the study area. The largest parking lot is located at the Safeway grocery store and contains approximately 75 spaces.

### Transit

The Georgia Avenue Corridor study area is served directly by Metrorail's Green Line with the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metrorail Station. This station connects the study area to major employment and population centers in the Washington metropolitan area, including: Downtown, Greenbelt and the Suitland Federal Center in suburban Maryland. The station is located in the center of the study area and has good access, with station portals located on both sides of Georgia Avenue, just north of the Georgia Avenue/New Hampshire Avenue intersection.

The community has expressed concerns about the frequency of Green Line trains compared to the frequency of trains on other lines, particularly the Red Line. The difference in train frequency could be partially attributed to 1.) the fact that Green Line trains have to share a single track with Yellow Line trains while Red Line trains have exclusive use of their track and 2.) the significantly larger number of daily Red Line passengers versus Green Line passengers.

The Georgia Avenue study area is served by eight bi-directional Metrobus routes. There are Metrobus stops located every two blocks along Georgia Avenue in the study area, with approximately 25 percent of the Metrobus stops having shelters. Most of the sheltered bus stops are located near the larger intersections in the study area (e.g. New Hampshire Avenue/Kansas Avenue intersection) and the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metrorail Station. The Washington Metro Area Transit Authority (WMATA) determines the location of bus shelters based on criteria developed by the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), with a general threshold of 50 boarding passengers per day justifying the installation of a passenger waiting shelter. A transportation study conducted in 2004 by the District's Department of Transportation (DDOT) for the Columbia Heights/Mount Pleasant neighborhood, included parts of Ward 1 along Georgia Avenue. The study shows the location of existing bus shelters and as well as those bus stops from New Hampshire Avenue to Barry Place that warrant a shelter based on boarding data. Within this boundary, a number of bus stops with a significant number of boardings do not have bus shelters. In some instances, individual bus stops with observed boarding volumes in excess of 400 passengers per day such as Irving/Georgia Avenue do not have shelters provided.

The frequency of service is generally very good along all of the study area bus routes, with 5-10 minute headways for most bus routes during weekday peak hours, 10-20 minute headways during weekday off-peak hours, and 20-40 minute headways during the evenings and weekends. However, the Metrobuses observed in the study area appear to be relatively crowded during both peak and non-peak travel periods.

### Pedestrian

Pedestrian traffic is generally light to moderate along the Georgia Avenue Corridor, with more pedestrian activity concentrated around the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metrorail Station and along blocks to the south of the station.



### III. Corridor Assessment

## TRANSPORTATION



Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro Station



Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro Station at New Hampshire/Georgia Avenue Intersection

Approximately half of the Georgia Avenue intersections in the study area are signalized, with several pedestrian-activated signals located in the northern part of the study area. Many of the intersections have clearly visible, double-lined crosswalks and appear to have been recently painted. Though some pedestrian crosswalks are marked at unsignalized intersections, there are several that are not clearly visible to drivers. In the 2004 DDOT Columbia Heights/Mount Pleasant Transportation study, pedestrian accidents by intersection for the five-year period of 1997 to 2001 from New Hampshire Avenue to Barry Place shows several intersections with high rates of pedestrian accidents. In some cases, the higher rates of pedestrian accidents may be, in part, the result of higher levels of pedestrian activity, but, in some cases, intersection design or operational issues may be contributing factors. Some locations of particular concern include:

- Newton Place/Georgia Avenue
- Park Road/Georgia Avenue
- Morton Street/Georgia Avenue; and
- Lamont Street/Georgia Avenue

The Georgia Avenue/New Hampshire Avenue intersection has long crosswalk distances across all of the intersection approaches.

The sidewalks along Georgia Avenue are four to six feet wide in some locations, and 10 to 12 feet in other area. The minimum recommended sidewalk width for streets with significant street-oriented commercial activity is eight feet. The minimum width of sidewalks with sidewalk cafes is typically 10 to 12 feet.

### Bicycle

The following undesirable characteristics currently exist along Georgia Avenue within the study area, which make Georgia Avenue undesirable for bicycle use:

- Heavy traffic volumes;
- Relatively high traffic speeds;
- Limited room available between on-street, parked cars and moving traffic; and

- Short blocks, with frequent curb cuts and intersections, which present cyclists with frequent potential vehicular conflict locations.

While there are less than desirable bicycle-riding conditions along Georgia Avenue in the study area, the arterial roadways and residential streets located immediately to the east and west of the corridor form a relatively dense grid of roadways. Relatively light traffic volumes not only make this surrounding street network pleasant for biking, but the street network also provides good access to retail and employment centers throughout the District.

Kansas Avenue has striped bicycle lanes in both directions for approximately a mile. There are also striped bike lanes located along 14th Street, NW, which is located two blocks to the west of Georgia Avenue and links the study area to the Columbia Heights and Mt. Pleasant neighborhoods. There are signed official “on road” bike routes located along 8th Street, NW and 13th Street, NW, which link the study area to the Takoma section of Northwest, Washington, D.C. and to Silver Spring, Maryland.

### Key Intersections

#### Georgia Avenue/New Hampshire Avenue Intersection Vicinity

The Georgia Avenue/New Hampshire Avenue intersection has long crosswalk distances across all of the intersection approaches. The intersection’s approaches are wider than average because of the odd, non-90-degree angle at which New Hampshire and Georgia Avenues intercept. In addition, Georgia Avenue and New Hampshire Avenue are both classified as “major arterial” roadways, and as a result, are designed to accommodate relatively high traffic volumes and relatively fast travel speeds, which further contributes to widened intersection approaches.

#### Georgia Avenue/Kansas Avenue Intersection Vicinity

The area located in the vicinity of the Georgia Avenue/Kansas Avenue intersection contains a fairly dense network of streets, which form several small, irregularly shaped blocks. There are several traffic and pedestrian-related issues created by these small, abnormally-shaped blocks, which include the following:

- Kansas Avenue/Varnum Street/9th Street Intersection – This 6-way intersection presents an

unusually complicated situation for motorists because they have to watch five approaches to make sure that they are clear of oncoming traffic before entering into the intersection. There is also poor sight-distance for vehicles entering into the intersection from the southbound approach of 9th Street.

- Georgia Avenue/Varnum Street Intersection – There is a high volume of student-pedestrians who cross Georgia Avenue when traveling between the residential area (located east of Georgia Avenue) and McFarland Middle School and Roosevelt High School (located to the west of Georgia Avenue). The Georgia Avenue/Varnum Street intersection (currently unsignalized) is located in close proximity, immediately north of the Georgia Avenue/Kansas Avenue intersection.
- 9th Street – 9th Street alternates between one-way and two-way, block-by-block, between Georgia Avenue and Kansas Avenue, which can be confusing to motorists unfamiliar with the area.

1 Source: DPW's 2000 ADT Map



### III. Corridor Assessment

## URBAN DESIGN AND PUBLIC REALM



Discontinuity of the street wall, vacant or abandoned ground level sites, narrow and inadequately landscaped sidewalks contribute to poorly defined public realm.

The study area for the Corridor Revitalization Plan for Georgia Avenue is approximately 1.6 miles long. For the major part of that length, older retail establishments developed inside or in the front of small row houses characterize the corridor. Residential neighborhoods comprised mostly of row houses line either side of the avenue on a gridded system of streets and blocks.

Two major diagonals, New Hampshire Avenue and Kansas Avenue, pass through the northern part of the study area in Petworth, a residue of the city system of diagonal streets bearing state names. Both diagonals are primarily residential in character, contrasting with the retail development that predominates Georgia Avenue. The intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and Georgia Avenue is also the location of the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro Station and has become the transportation nexus of the study area.

Topographically, the avenue rises continuously from the study area adjacent to Howard University, flattens out for a stretch between Girard Street and Rock Creek Church Road and then climbs again as it passes the Georgia Avenue-Petworth Metro Station to a crest at Allison Street. The northernmost part of the study area is generally flat.

### Urban Design

The vast majority of lots facing Georgia Avenue are quite shallow, averaging about 75' to 80' in depth. This is consistent with the row house origins of the area when lots were platted throughout the city on similar dimensions. The subsequent transformation of those properties from residential to retail use has resulted in an increment of very small shops fronting Georgia Avenue with little flexibility to expand. Often those buildings have been expanded with a one-story addition to the front of the building, resulting in a very uneven streetscape. Many retail properties never changed the residential configuration of the building front, leaving in place the small set of steps leading up to the front door.

Few buildings in the project area are taller than a standard three-story row house. Some five- and six-story apartment buildings, such as the Paramount at the corner of Georgia and Quincy Street, exist and are blended well into the streetscape. Most of the storefronts added to the fronts of row houses are one story with the awkward bulk of the residential mass peering out the center of the block.

Most recent automobile-oriented development is one story in height.

In general, the buildings of the project area are older structures, mostly built during the expansion of the city northwards in the 1920's. The residential streets are characterized by long stretches of row houses, some with porches, some without, in a graceful rhythm. Some smaller structures were built to serve as retail establishment in the corridor, but by far a larger portion of current retail buildings are former residential row houses converted to retail use.

The shallow depth of the blocks lining Georgia Avenue also limits parking opportunities in the corridor. Few sites are large enough to service the parking demands they generate and recent years have seen the influx of automobile-oriented "drive-in" businesses. Those businesses are found mostly in the Park View/Park Morton neighborhood area and have resulted in a streetscape without definition and in general, poorer in quality as well.

The existing buildings are set close to the sidewalk with generally ten to twelve feet between the building facade and the street curb. This narrow dimension contributes to the vitality of the street life but also makes outdoor retail, such as seating for restaurants, almost impossible.

The Park Morton public housing complex, located between Park Road and Lamont Street on the east side of Georgia Avenue, is the only public housing complex in the project area. It features garden-style apartment buildings and is centered around a cul-de-sac street that eliminated a previous connection to Park Road to the east. The buildings are center-hall apartment buildings of a character diverse from the surrounding context.

To the north, suburban-style development has also made its impact felt, particularly with the development of several drive-in restaurants and gas stations on the west side of Georgia Avenue between Shepherd and Upshur Streets. Upshur Street itself is the location of an older retail street east of Georgia Avenue and connects to a former area of light industry to the west. The Petworth Public Library is located on that corner and is a valued public asset.

North of Buchanan Street the detached single-family house becomes the predominant building type with the disappearance of retail frontage. This area contrasts with the row house neighborhoods to the south by having fewer gaps in the street wall.

### Public Realm

The construction of the Metro station resulted in the creation of several opportunity sites at the intersection of New Hampshire and Georgia Avenue and the elimination of the tree median in the center of New Hampshire Avenue. Consequently, that intersection, even though located at a major transit hub, is one of the most difficult streets to cross, moving in almost any direction. The unfriendly nature of the pedestrian environment there is exacerbated as well by the large Metrobus staging area on the west side of the street, making the street much wider and resulting in an increase in the amount of time a pedestrian needs to get from one side of Georgia Avenue to the other.

Few parks and public plazas exist along Georgia Avenue in the study area. The largest public park is located at the intersection of Kansas Avenue and Georgia Avenue in the northernmost section. The area adjacent to the Petworth - Georgia Avenue metro station provides for a an opportunity for a community space of some dimension, connected with future development.